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February 7, 2007

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

The Committee on Finance convened on February 7, 2007, with Chairman Maryann Heuston presiding and Committee Members Aldermen Bruce Desmond, Dennis Sullivan and Robert Trane also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen William White and Rebekah Gewirtz, Sgt. Rooney from the SPD, Finance Director Ed Bean, Phil Ercolini, Gerry Boyle, Mark Friedman and Anne Thomas from SPCD, Vithal Deshpande from the DPW and Chief Assessor Dick Brescia.

182610

Library Trustee Patricia Wild spoke about the \$25,000 transfer from the Library to the Fire Department and asked that the funds be kept in the library account to deal with some of the much needed repairs. Mr. Boyle explained that part of a Homeland Security Grant was earmarked for the lintel work at the Fire Station, but the cost was more than what was estimated, so the library funds are needed to complete the work. Mr. Bean stated that there are no extra funds in the Fire Department and that there is a sense of immediacy so as not to jeopardize the grant. The funds would come from the vacancy in the Assistant Director's position that has an annual salary of \$60,000. This position has not been filled during the current fiscal year, so the funds are available. Mr. Bean told the members that in the absence of a Library Director, the mayor is the department head. The city is in the process of performing an analysis of what repairs are needed at the library and will look at other sources of funding.

Aldermen Sullivan, Heuston and Desmond submitted a motion *that the library be examined for safety concerns, in conjunction with a member of the library's Board of Trustees, within 2 weeks and that those concerns be addressed immediately utilizing in-house labor.* The motion was approved.

A discussion was held regarding the funding for the repairs and Mr. Bean stated that the funds would come from the Buildings and Grounds account or from another source, but not from the library's budget.

182607

Mr. Deshpande explained what was done to remediate the recent fuel spill at the high school and he stated that much of the work was performed by the DPW. He noted that the cost was more than what was anticipated due to the discovery of another layer of contamination below the current layer. Alderman Desmond asked that the committee be informed of the square footage of the area in question.

Alderman Trane's motion *that the item be voted out of committee without a recommendation* was approved.

The Committee asked that DPW Commissioner Stan Koty, Environmental Manager Peter Mills and any other appropriate persons involved in the cleanup of the oil leak at the high school be present at the

February 8, 2007 Board of Aldermen's meeting to present documentation relative to the cleanup and to discuss an itemized list of expenses to date and estimates for future work. The committee stressed that it is imperative that all parties be present, as requested.

182638

Ms. Thomas and Mr. Ercolini told the members that Butler Drive would become part of the St. Polycarp parcel making the developer responsible for its maintenance. The members were told that abandonment is necessary so that the development of the parcel might move forward.

182594

Mr. Brescia discussed the taxing of billboards and said that there are approximately 20 billboards in the city that are currently taxed. He told the members that he contacted the Department of Revenue and checked with the state regarding a bill that is now pending in the legislature which would allow the city to tax the entity that is leasing the billboard. The city's Law Department advised Mr. Brescia to wait until the bill is settled. Mr. Brescia noted that the billboards are taxed as real estate and not on the value of any income derived from the advertising.

182595

Mr. Brescia told the members that the city would be fine through the remainder of the fiscal year and that only half of the \$1.35 million overlay was used to date. There are 20 pending appellate cases and the city is in a good position to handle them.

The committee discussed matters before it and took action on the following 4 items:

182607: Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval of a \$400,000 appropriation for Building Improvements to the High School to remediate the fuel oil release from two underground storage tanks, and authorization to borrow \$400,000 with a bond.

RECOMMENDATION: No recommendation

VOTE: Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

182610: Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval of a \$25,000 transfer from the Library Salaries Acct. to the Capital Project Mgmt., Capital Items, Building Improvements Acct. to finish replacing lintels at the Fire Dept., 266

RECOMMENDATION: Should be approved

VOTE: Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

182611: Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval to expend a \$14,000 grant from the MA Office of Public Safety for the Police Dept. "Click It or Ticket" and "You Drink & Drive, You Lose" campaigns.

RECOMMENDATION: Should be approved

VOTE: Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

182638: Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval to abandon Butler Dr. in connection with the St. Polycarp Affordable Housing Project.

RECOMMENDATION: Should be approved

VOTE: Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

Alderman Maryann Heuston, Chairman
Committee on Finance

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Finance,
February 7, 2007

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk